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REMILITARIZATION OF JAPAN -  
PROSPECTS AND IMPACTS

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**ABSTRACT**

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Japan has, under the protective umbrella of the United States, grown to be the world's richest country in terms of foreign exchange reserve. Yet her roles in the international arena are not commensurate with her economic stature. In the past, she was especially slow to respond to United Nations peace operations citing Constitutional limits. What roles should Japan play internationally, roles that would not cause anxiety to her neighboring countries? Also, there have always been concerns, especially among older Southeast Asians, who still have vivid memories of Japanese military atrocities during the Japanese Occupation, that Japan may trend towards militarism. What are the factors pushing or restraining Japan to remilitarize? This essay analyses these issues, and discusses the impact of a rearmed Japan to the world and to Southeast Asia in particular.



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## REMILITARIZATION OF JAPAN - PROSPECTS AND IMPACTS

### INTRODUCTION

Japan, with the world's largest foreign exchange reserve of US\$210 billion, is undoubtedly an economic superpower. However, her political and international statures are not commensurate with her economic stature. She appeared to the rest of the world as especially lethargic in supporting Allied efforts against Iraq in the Gulf War and was not forthcoming in supporting other United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions until more recently. In effect, Japan showed failure in assuming global responsibility commensurate with her economic superpower status.

In the past, Japan's foreign policy was marked by extreme insularity from the outside world. Post-World War II Japan was concerned about reconstruction of her economy under the US protective umbrella. Japan's past behavior can largely be attributed to the pacifist character of her post-war Constitution which the US helped in writing. US security umbrella also meant that Japan could save on defense spending and concentrate on economic development. As the US has been continually pushing Japan to assume higher military as well as international roles in the world, what does the future portend for Japan? Given her country's aversion to militarism, what are the prospects of a rearmed Japan considering the internal and external pressures

acting for or against it? In Southeast Asia where Japan has massive economic interest and involvement, and a region that still has memories of the Japanese Occupation, what will be the apprehension, anxiety and speculation on a Japan that trends towards militarism? This essay analyses the prospects of remilitarization of Japan. It discusses the impacts on the world, and Southeast and Northeast Asia of a rearmed Japan.

### THESIS

The thrust of this presentation is that in the near term, Japan is unlikely to remilitarize to an extent that would cause unease to Asia and the rest of the world. Japan can still enhance her international prestige and stature by contributing to the many UN sponsored non-combat missions and initiatives. And US oversight over developments in the Japanese military arena is important.

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Japan in the 1930s was a resource-poor nation. She was a proponent of the Second World War, in the East Asia region, in her bid to insure her access to foreign sources of energy and raw materials to feed her growing industries or risk economic

stagnation and decline. The militaristic character of the pre-war Cabinet facilitated the pursuit of this option.

Upon her surrender on August 15, 1945, the nation was completely disarmed by the Allies. Her security from then on was provided by the Occupation Forces - the US. The nation then assumed a pacifist character, one which is embodied in Article 9 of the post-war Constitution renouncing aggression:

"... The Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes..... The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized."

However, in the wake of the Korean War which saw US involvement, Japan was encouraged, by the same US that "imposed" on it the post-war Article 9 of the Constitution, to establish a force to assist in the maintenance of security in Japan while US forces were committed in Korea. This force, the National Police Reserve, was the forerunner of the Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF).

Japan's post-war economic growth has been phenomenal. The security umbrella provided by the US allowed Japan to concentrate her energy and resources on economic rehabilitation. Japan was to enjoy "maximum protection with minimum defense capability" <sup>1</sup> and expenditure, and attaining her current status as the world's second largest economic power. US presence in Japan is now in its

fifty-first year and will continue yet with the recent pronouncement by President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto after the Tokyo summit meeting in April 1996.

The way Japan went about developing her economy was the subject of criticism. While her high savings and investment rates were laudable, she was protected by many trade barriers all in the name of protecting her fledgling new industries. Japanese companies overseas were staffed at the management level with Japanese only. Few foreign workers were allowed to seek employment in Japan. Before long, she became an economic powerhouse. While the growth rate has been impressive in the past, Japan has showed signs of slowing down. In the future though, demography may have a huge impact on her growth. Her population forecast shows a "peak in 2010 at 129 million, falling thereafter to 100 million by 2068 and as low as 94 million by 2090."<sup>2</sup>

#### GLOBAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In the Cold-War era, the Japan did not actively pursue an independent foreign policy being content to ally herself with the US in most foreign policy undertakings. Her foreign policy was then synchronous with that of the US. Hence structurally, Japan

has a problem lately in trying to play a more active role internationally and independently. Japan is a relative newcomer to the international scene and was out of the international policy arena for a large part of the 1950s and 1960s as she was content with economic pursuits as espoused by the Yoshida Doctrine - which called for Japan to focus on economic pursuits rather than embroil herself in political and military maneuvering which the doctrine deemed counter-productive.<sup>3</sup> Although internally, many statesmen were trying to seek national prestige by egging the leadership to play a higher profile in international politics, her Constitution seemed to get in the way.

In the economic sphere, Japan was most comfortable in dealing with the world. Her trade ties and investments benefited many under-developed and developing countries. The Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) program was very successful in which she dispensed funds to help poorer nations. Still, it was felt that Japan was selective in such aid programs ensuring that recipient countries were in fact countries which Japan drew her natural resources from. Often the links between ODA and returns of income to Japan were more direct.

On humanitarian assistance, Japan could have done much more. Some UN initiatives to help disaster-struck nations were not promptly supported by Japan, being embroiled in prolonged deliberations on whether their SDF (or even civilians from the disaster rescue agency) could indeed be used in such endeavors.

Perhaps the issues that seemed to consume the government and the country and which generated most controversies and debate were those relating to use of SDF for UN missions. UN first approached Japan in 1958 to send SDF officers to Lebanon as part of a UN peacekeeping mission to no avail. International criticism of Japan intensified in 1987, when Japan refused to participate in international relief efforts following an earthquake in Mexico.<sup>4</sup> Debate was most intense in 1990 during the buildup leading to the Persian Gulf War. The Japanese government had to confront the issue of what form of contribution Japan should make, including use of SDF troops overseas, to avoid US consternation. As contributions from Allied nations poured into the US effort in forming a military coalition force, Japan was unable to respond readily. This "shocked the Japanese into realizing the international inadequacy of their brand of pacifism."<sup>5</sup> Eventually Japan contributed financially to the coalition to the tune of US\$13 billion, but not troop

participation (although Maritime Self Defense Force minesweepers were sent after the cessation of hostilities to help remove mines in the Persian Gulf waters). Seeking to dispatch troops for UN duties in Cambodia was also hotly debated. The threshold was eventually breached when the Diet approved, in June 1992, the employment of SDF troops for non-combat duties in Cambodia, not without imposing a host of accompanying cumbersome conditions of do's and don'ts. Beyond this, Japan managed to contribute more regionally and internationally, notably in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) in 1995, and troops for non-combat involvement in Angola (in 1992), Mozambique (in 1993 - 1995), El Salvador (in 1994), and the Golan Heights in 1996 as part of UN efforts.

#### PROSPECTS OF REMILITARIZATION

The reasons for Japan to trend towards remilitarization seem legitimate. Such reasons range from ensuring her survival to fear of the implications that an unstable region have on her security well-being.

Foremost on the minds of the Japanese government is the perception of the Russian Far East threat. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) may have disintegrated and the

strength of the military forces reduced but the Russians still have enormous stockpiles of weapon systems from their former bases in Eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup> The disputed sovereignty over the four southern islands of the Kurile chain with the Russians continues to hound the Japanese. Since the visit of former Soviet President Gorbachev in 1991 to the most recent visit by President Boris Yeltsin in October 1993, little headway was made to resolve this issue. Also, the proximity of the Vladivostok military base, where the huge Russian Pacific Fleet is based, is uncomfotring as Japan is well within the influence of those Russian ships and aircraft (including powerful striking systems like the SS-20 nuclear ballistic missiles, submarines(SSBNs) and Backfire bombers) operating from there. Her concern is real as "the Japanese Air Self Defense Force for instance, 'scrambled' against approaching Soviet military aircraft between 850 to 900 times a year"<sup>7</sup>. Although this has gone down considerably in the past few years, the fact remains that Japan would have little response time in any confrontation with the Russians. Coupled with the Japanese perception that the US may be suffering from leadership fatigue and be tempted to reduce her presence in Japan, these issues demand that Japan has a credible military if any untoward Russian initiative looms over Japan given the enviable wealth

Japan has and the scope to divert the attention of the Russian populace from the current civil problem.<sup>8</sup> Both countries have yet to sign any cease-fire agreement following the conclusion of the Second World War.

Japan may be compelled to protect her sea-lines-of-communication (SLOC) across the South China Sea where ships ferrying raw materials to feed Japanese industries ply. Resource-poor Japan draws her raw materials and energy needs from Southeast Asia and the Middle East, among other regions. Her energy needs are partially met by Indonesia (12%) and substantially (80%) from the Middle East. Historically and particularly in recent years, the South China Sea has evinced to be a 'hotspot'. It is a potential flashpoint for open conflict given the contesting claims by six fringing countries over the Paracel and Spratly Islands. Indeed China clashed bloodily with Vietnam in March 1988 and asserted herself on numerous occasions over this issue, most recently with the Philippines over the Mischief Reef in 1995.<sup>9</sup> With such uncertainty, and the potential threat to her SLOC, Japan has every right to feel jittery and would be tempted to have a naval capability to be able to insure the safety of her ships serving her economic needs.

In formulating her foreign policy, Japan did express her concern over the unstable neighborhood. The Chinese government's high-handedness in quelling the Tiananmen incident in 1989 did cause unease in Japan. The tension between the Koreas is still not diffused as the Koreans are technically at war. China and Taiwan maintain a fragile armed truce and each side contemplates unifying the other. The posturing by the Chinese last year against the Taiwanese was serious enough to warrant the US dispatching two carrier battle groups from the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Straits. The 'dormant' issues of territorial dispute with China over the Senkaku Islands (which the Chinese called Diaoyutai - lying between Taiwan and Okinawa) and the minor dispute over seabed concession in the Ryukyu Islands with Taiwan are potential issues of conflict. The Senkaku issue was recently revived with over zealous Hongkongers sailing to the disputed islands to lay claims. The North Koreans are known to be doing continual research and development on their Nodong - 1 missiles capable of 1000 km range, putting Japan well within their reach. The North Koreans are also slow to respond to the obligations of the 1994 Agreed Framework with the US to abandon their nuclear program. As long as these issues remain, it indicates an unstable

neighborhood. Having a military capability would give Japan an ability to reply to challenges to her security and interests.

The US has accumulated a growing budget deficit, which in 1996 stood at US\$107 billion, and finds it increasingly unbearable to meet its overseas military commitments. The Pentagon, now in its ninth year of drawdown, further planned to reduce the armed forces. Now that the Warsaw Pact structure is dismantled, the temptation for US to reduce her defense spending and alleviate her economic burden is real. There is also the lingering thought in the Japanese minds that "US will have neither the capability nor the political will to come to Japan's aid in any but the most extreme circumstances."<sup>10</sup> Tokyo is confident that the US will respond if Japan is attacked but if it has to deal with crises in the South China Sea or over the Senkaku islands, Tokyo is not certain. Domestic agenda is likely to consume more time and resources of President Clinton's second-term administration.

The US have, during the Reagan's administration, prodded Japan to help to shoulder the defense burden. This call also stems from the American public's disenchantment with the Japanese rise as an economic power only second to hers under the US security umbrella that was financed substantially by the American

taxpayers. Japan has often been criticized for taking a "free ride" in defense and that "its economy was expanding like mutant fruit under the warm protective shield of American's 'nuclear umbrella'." <sup>11</sup> The Japanese acquiesced quite reluctantly, with the government decision taken in 1981, in full accord with the US, to extend its sea lane defense to the 1000 miles radius patrolled by the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF). This first saw an expanded military role but in a manner that was purely defensive.

There were some Japanese politicians, particularly among the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who desired greater national prestige and a higher military profile. They even advocated tampering with Article 9 of the Constitution. Former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone and the largest newspaper, Yomiuri Shimbun, were among those. Prime Minister Hashimoto, then at the helm, did not agree, citing that "US deterrence under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security remains the guarantee of Japan's security." <sup>12</sup> Indeed at the height of the debate on contribution to the Gulf War, and to respond to international criticism over Japan's contribution, younger leaders like the then LDP Secretary-General Ichiro Ozawa, made similar calls. He also called for major structural changes in domestic politics so

that Japan can contribute to international society "in the security as well as economic realms." <sup>13</sup>

Japan actually has latent military power potential as she has a large defense industrial base, and is at the forefront of some military technological areas. Her commercial heavy industries - Fuji, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, etc. - have the potential to be mobilized for defense production if required. Japan currently produces her own tanks, ships and aircraft. The FSX aircraft program, which uses the US-made F-16 as a base model, was embarked in co-operation with the US. <sup>14</sup> However, as her Three Principles of Arms Export forbid her to sell her military equipment to other countries except to the US, her defense industries do not enjoy economies of scale. For instance, their Type-90 tank each costs an estimated 940 million yen (about US\$10.4 million at 1996 prices), whereas the mass-produced M1A2 costs half of that (estimated at 590 million yen). That Japan continues to develop her defense industries, despite the lack of economies of scale, shows streaks of determination to be self-reliant in defense industrial capability, and raises suspicion of neighboring countries. There is a lot of commercial content in her defense products, to offset the otherwise high cost of production. The strong steel material for military

vehicles is also used in deep sea probe vehicles the commercial industries are producing. The light and durable aluminum alloy for their armored vehicles is also used for their Shinkansen bullet train car. So are composite material, heat resistant fine ceramic as well as micro-electronic, all having dual-use.

In defense technological areas, the US Critical Technologies Plan for 1990 reported that while the US lagged the then Soviet Union in only one out of twenty technologies crucial to the long term technological superiority of American weapon systems, Japan led in five areas: semi-conductors, robotics, super conductivity, biotechnology and photonics. The Japanese are believed to be well placed in the development of four emerging technologies "useful for weapons of the future: very high speed integrated circuits, digital gallium arsenide circuits, microwave monolithic integrated circuits, and mercury cadmium telluride for infra-red detectors." <sup>15</sup>

#### LIMITING FACTORS

Perhaps the strongest singular factor limiting her bid to remilitarize is the pacifist clause of her Constitution which is strongly embedded in the Japanese society. The nation opposed remilitarization, particularly the generation that bore the brunt

of Allied offensive on Japan in the Second World War. Even Japan's innocuous financial contribution towards the conduct of Allied operation in the Gulf War was heatedly debated in the Diet. So was the decision to dispatch four minesweepers to assist in clearing mines in the Persian Gulf, after the war had ended, under UN auspices. It took some time for the Diet to finally agree to send a Combat Engineer Battalion to Cambodia, under the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), to help rebuild the country, but not without a host of conditions governing the activities they were and were not allowed to do.<sup>16</sup> It even included instructions that SDF units sent abroad under the new law should "stay away from the sound of gunfire."<sup>17</sup> The deliberations on participation in UN missions started in October 1990 when Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu moved the UN Peace Co-operation Bill supporting SDF troops' participation in non-combat UN roles. The Bill died in November 1990. It was revived in September 1991 as the UN Peacekeeping Operation Co-operation Bill and was eventually approved by both Houses in June 1992. It was not an easy issue to grapple, as culturally the Japanese are uncomfortable with issues without precedents. However, it must be noted that as soon as that threshold was breached, and a precedent had been set, subsequent UN missions were more readily

supported. Indeed the issue of "sending military personnel abroad illustrates with great clarity the rigidity of Japan's security policy in the face of pressure from the US and rapidly changing conditions in the international system."<sup>18</sup> Certainly the road to remilitarization is likely to be fraught with domestic Japanese resistance.

Also the ceiling on the defense budget, formally pegged by the Miki government at one percent of their GNP since 1976 (though in 1987 it was breached slightly during Prime Minister Nakasone's administration)<sup>19</sup> would limit Japan's efforts in developing an offensive military capability. Her present order of battle, some defense analysts have suggested, is barely enough to defend her territories let alone build an offensive capability. Unless this ceiling is consciously breached and in substantial extent, it will continue to cap her military buildup.

Before Japan can exert her influence and power in East Asia or beyond, she would have to contend with the two other significant emerging regional powers - China and India - currently with significant military might who would be enticed to exert their influence in the region. Japan neither presently nor in the near future can measure up to the military might of either China or India. To illustrate, "China has a nuclear weapons

capability (which Japan abjures) and nearly eighteen times the military powers of Japan." <sup>20</sup>

The political and military characters of modern Japan, as against pre-war Japan, do not encourage militarism. The militaristic character of the pre-war Cabinet is absent in the present context. The very economic reasons which drove the Japanese to bear arms are also absent as prosperous Japan has been busily cultivating friendship, mainly through development aid, with resource-rich countries. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia, with its wealth of natural resources, is a recipient of generous Japanese ODA funds. Table 1 below seems to suggest a co-relation between the amount of ODA aid dispensed and the amount of raw materials received from recipient countries. Japan is now a major player in the raw material market and has a major influence on the extraction of raw materials, processing and pricing. Efforts are being made to reduce dependency in a variety of ways, "including long-term contracts, diversification of sources of supply, ownership of overseas extraction operations to reduce the risk of supply interruption, provision of foreign aid and other financial aid to supplier nations to build goodwill, creation of stockpiles, substitution of materials, conservation and technological change to reduce material inputs." <sup>21</sup> Hence, Japan

is not at the mercy of raw material suppliers in the way it was in the years leading up to the Pacific War, and this certainly exudes a greater sense of security and confidence in the country.

Table 1 - Net ODA from Japan and Raw Material

Imports by Japan from some Asian Countries, 1990.<sup>22</sup>

(In million US dollars)

<u>Recipient</u>	<u>ODA From Japan</u>	<u>Japan's Imports</u>
Indonesia	867.7	10,067.1
China	723.0	5,540.1
Thailand	418.6	1,757.2
Philippines	647.5	1,357.0
India	87.3	1,068.8

Civilian control over the military puts a brake on the possibility of a return to militarism. The Prime Minister exercises supreme command and control over the SDF. The supervisory Defense Agency are firmly under civilian leadership. The Diet is the legislature and budgetary decision making body on SDF manning level, main organizations, defense build-up, and must approve any deployment of SDF troops overseas. Civilian control is so firmly entrenched that even the Chairman of the Joint Staff Council, the most senior military appointment holder, does not sit on the National Security Council chaired by the Prime Minister, which deals with issues on national security. The military are not allowed to appear for Diet hearings either. The

limits of civilian control of the military are well beyond those of the US and many other democracies. In effect, the Japanese military has been rendered politically impotent.

The relations between Japan and most Asian countries, especially the ASEAN countries have never been better. This was affirmed by Prime Minister Hashimoto when he visited several ASEAN countries in January 1997. The visit was made even when the Peru hostage crisis involving Japanese diplomats was still unresolved, indicating the attention the Japanese placed on relations with ASEAN. Japan's cordial relations with China are into their twenty-fifth year and there is nothing to indicate that this will not continue.<sup>23</sup> Together with the US, Japan has been involved in KEDO to try and assist North Korea to disband its nuclear program. All these developments are indicators of Japanese's effort to create a relatively more stable region, one which Japan would not want to usurp by remilitarizing her nation.

The US - Japan alliance is an important mechanism that calms fears of Japanese militarism. The US is committed to the defense of Japan from external threat thus denying Japan from acquiring an offensive military capability. The US presence also has a calming effect over the East Asia region. That the US is

committed to the Asia-Pacific region was firmly endorsed with the Clinton-Hashimoto Declaration of April 1996.

#### JAPAN AS A "NORMAL POWER" AND THE IMPACTS OF A REARMED JAPAN

It is possible for Japan to be a "normal power", one that is more independent and confident in the conduct of her foreign policy. It would be a Japan that continues to maintain restrictions on unilateral overseas military deployment except when operating under the auspices of the UN and within the limits of the mutual treaty with the US. She would actively participate and promote the many humanitarian missions and UN initiatives on environmental issues. Such a Japan would endear herself to the world as her contributions would be selfless and in a positive manner. This contrasts with a Japan which Asians and the world are apprehensive about - a Japan that chooses to rearm, with serious implications.

Regionally, the impact of a rearmed Japan would be alarming. A rearmed Japan would cast a new military balance in East and Southeast Asia. Russia and China are concerned with internal politics and economic modernization and may not be as concerned in the interim, while India has not presently appeared keen to dominate Southeast Asia directly. The US does not maintain the

same kind of presence as in the past and is turning to their domestic agenda with further defense spending cuts. ASEAN as a regional alliance still does not have a collective military match to replace the US.

Given the memories of Japanese atrocities during the Second World War, a rearmed Japan would certainly send jitters to all in Southeast Asia. One way to ease the concern about resurgent Japanese militarism "would be to create in Asia the sort of multilateral security regimes that have quieted European worries about revival of militarism in Germany."<sup>24</sup> Countries making up the multilateral balance could be the US, Russia, PRC, India and Japan together with ASEAN. A multilateral balance is possible if changes take place gradually. Whatever role Japan is to play, it should be, as former Singapore Prime Minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew asserted, "based on Japan working closely with the American military instead of going it alone."<sup>25</sup> US involvement is necessary to check the growth of the Japanese military and as a restraint over the latter.

Japan is currently the largest donor of economic aid to ASEAN countries, and is one of the principal investors and trading partners with ASEAN. If her present one percent of the GNP ceiling for defense budget is substantially surpassed, and

funds are siphoned for military-related developments, the extent of ODA funds to ASEAN countries could well be affected or even reduced. Although her 'economic pie' may grow larger, with increased defense spending, Japan will be less willing to inflate ODA funds for needy Southeast Asian countries.

A remilitarized Japan could well see the lifting of the restriction on export of military hardware and transfer of military technology to other countries. Southeast Asian countries could benefit from the technological advances of the Japanese defense industries which have been meeting a large portion of her military hardware needs. The possibility of military aid from Japan to needy Southeast Asia countries could materialize and enhance their abilities to develop their own regional security roles. Some Indonesians were known to "welcome the concessional sale of equipment and ships to help patrol those straits vital to the flow of Japanese oil, a sale unlikely under present Japanese policy."<sup>26</sup>

Yet another impact is that the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality concept conceived by the Malaysians and adopted by ASEAN, could be threatened by Southeast Asian countries participating in a regional arms race and emerging powers jostling for power and influence. A rearmed Japan by itself, or

which generates a contest with the emerging regional powers in this region would trigger a greater regional armament race in the Asia-Pacific. Southeast Asian countries may by themselves equip their militaries to deter aggressive designs over their boundaries and to protect their own security interests. In the absence of an ASEAN security alliance, individual countries have to fend for themselves.

#### ANALYSIS

On balance, it is unlikely that Japan will begin remilitarizing in earnest in the near future. The generation of Japanese and East Asians who abjures Japanese militarism will resist any Japanese attempt in this direction. The current leadership in Japan and the rest of the region are opposed to it. In the far future, with a younger generation of regional leaders, the issue is uncertain. For one, they do not carry the same emotional baggage their predecessors do.

Japan, many feel, needs to come to terms with her past. China was particularly disturbed and protested when in 1986, the Japanese Ministry of Education attempted to "sanitize" Japan's role in the Second World War in Japanese school textbooks. The

books denied any Japanese involvement in the "Nanking Massacre", and substituted the word "advance" for "invasion" of China. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew believes Japan has to undergo a catharsis regarding its war role, a cleansing he believes the Germans have gone through.<sup>27</sup> Mr. Lee thinks that the Japanese, once unrestrained, would prove to be equally as good generals and admirals as they have been businessmen, given their commitment to excel in anything they do. The Chinese government also perceived as negative indicators when members of the Japanese Cabinet visited the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, honoring several war criminals responsible for Japanese expansion before 1945. Beijing protested when former Prime Minister Nakasone visited the same shrine in August 1995. As recently as October 1996, Prime Minister Hashimoto was reported to have visited the controversial shrine that commemorates war dead.<sup>28</sup>

Many Asians feel that Japan needs to express remorse over her past atrocities to convince other regional nations of her sincerity to be pacifist. Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu has, while in Singapore in May 1991, expressed "sincere contrition at past Japanese action,"<sup>29</sup> and announced that they are resolved not to repeat those actions. Observers saw this as a positive move. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew felt "it was a necessary move which Japan had to

make before it assumed a bigger role in international affairs."<sup>30</sup> Any political or military related initiative by Japan should be taken with Asian sensitivities in mind. Similar gestures were made by Emperor Akihito when he visited China in October 1992, expressing regrets for what the Japanese did to the people of China.

To many, Japan's defense budget is often cited as a possible indicator of Japanese trending towards remilitarization. The London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies reported that Japan's military expenditure for 1995 of US\$50.2 was the third largest in the world.<sup>31</sup> Many tend to look at these absolute figures without scrutinizing the details on spending and form their own conclusions. An analysis of the 1994 defense budget showed that the biggest chunk of the budget - some 42.6% - was allocated for personnel costs.<sup>32</sup> The SDF has approximately 260,000 civilian and military personnel and knowing wage costs in Japan, it is hardly surprising that this amount was necessary. Some 21.3% of the budget was allocated for defense procurement which is not alarming as she purchased most of her military hardware from her local defense industries, operating without economies of scale. Japan also has to, as part of burden sharing, provide US\$6 billion in annual funds for the maintenance of US

troops in Japan.<sup>33</sup> The result is that despite spending the third most in the world, the actual military capability Japan is able to achieve for that expenditure makes it weaker than the other regional actors such as China or either of the Koreas.

On Japan's sharing of the defense burden with the US, it can take many forms. Apart from building a military capability of alarming proportion, she could relieve the US by taking on the patrol of more of her waters than what she currently does. Japan has subtly indicated many times that she would be prepared to do more to contribute to international peace and stability under the auspices of the Mutual Security Treaty, if US takes the lead. Japan can also meet a greater part of the total cost for the maintenance of US presence in Japan. Currently, she meets about 80% of the cost to station US troops in Japan. In this way, the burden of the US is lighter and the US would be better able to prolong their presence in this region. If Japan can meet more of her defense needs, the US can shift part of their presence and attention elsewhere where it is needed more, including within Southeast Asia. The SDF should offer their services when called for by the UN for participation in non-combat roles. Whatever she offers to do militarily, the oversight by the US is important. ASEAN nations basically agree that Japan should not play a

unilateral role in Southeast Asia. A suggestion by Thailand Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan in 1990 to hold joint military exercises between Japan and Thailand provoked criticisms from Singapore where critics argued that there should not be Japanese troops in Southeast Asia. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew likened the effect of dispatching such troops to that of giving liquor chocolates to reformed alcoholics." <sup>34</sup>

In her strive to project a better international image, it would be better for Japan to contribute towards international endeavors other than combat roles. Her personnel involvement in multilateral institutions is particularly lacking, considering Japan's world stature. In 1990, there was no Japanese on the staff of 27 officers in the International Monetary Fund, and few were in the UN headquarters. The few prominent Japanese serving in UN organizations were former Professor at Jochi (Sophia) University, Sadako Ogata - the UN High Commissioner for Refugees; Hiroshi Nakajima in World Health Organization until 1992; Makato Taniguchi, OECD Deputy Secretary-General and Yasushi Akashi, the UN Special Representative to Cambodia in 1992. In this regard, it is good for Japan to volunteer her people and money particularly for humanitarian missions. She could also offer her management expertise to multilateral institutions like the IMF or World Bank

in which her presence is hardly felt. In the area of environmental protection, Japan can enlarge on her past contributions by using ODA funds as a form of leverage to get recipient countries with poor environment protection records to comply with environmental control standards. With all these initiatives, Japan can play a prominent global role without the accompanying anxieties and tension.

Japan is a great economic power with latent great military power potential. It is important that she does not choose the road to remilitarization to exert her influence and international prestige. By opting for international stature in a non-remilitarization way, Japan could well enhance her chance to seek a permanent seat in the UN Security Council which she has been clamoring for.

#### CONCLUSION

Generally, past anti-Japanese sentiment among Southeast Asians is less vehement in recent years. This is attributed to the Look East policies of some ASEAN countries to emulate the Japanese economic dynamism and work ethics. Singapore adopted as an official policy a "Learn From Japan" campaign in 1978, and Malaysia launched a "Look East" (basically a Look Towards Japan)

policy in 1982. In 1987, a Filipino Cabinet Minister stated he wanted the Philippines to be like "Japan Incorporated."<sup>35</sup> As a Southeast Asian economist observed "... the Japanese way has become an object of considerable admiration and imitation. The result of such a change in attitude is the disappearance of the anti-Japanese movement."<sup>36</sup> With such a political climate, there is scope for Japan's participation to ensure a safer Asia. Her current good relations with ASEAN will put her in good stead for this to materialize. As long as her military development is intimately checked by the US, and as long as Japan considers the political sensitivities of other Asian countries including having regular consultation on political and security matters, her military presence in the distant future in this region will be more acceptable.

A Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, in the mold of the pre-World War II Japanese propaganda instrument, is unlikely to take shape. The conditions that drove the Japanese to that war cause are absent and her economy is now too interdependent with ASEAN, the Asian countries and the world at large. Moreover, the East Asian and Southeast Asian countries are more prepared to lay down their lives for the defense of their countries and

independence, unlike their less committed colonial masters, in the case of Southeast Asian countries.

The words of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew best summed up the current sentiments of most Southeast Asians on the remilitarization of Japan - "we'd all be happier if the American security alliance remains, leaving Japan to concentrate on high definition television." <sup>37</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Frances Lai Fung Wai, "Japan's Defense Policy and its Implication for the ASEAN Countries," ISEAS Southeast Asian Affairs, (1984):49.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Health and Welfare, Institute of Population Problems, *Nihon no Shorai Suikei Jinko (Heisei 3 - Nem 6 - Gatsu Zantei Suikei) Japan's Future Estimated Population (Provisional Estimate, June 1991)*, (Tokyo: Kosei Tokei Kyokai 1991), 6-11. Japan also has to grapple with a growing population that is greying. In 1995, 15 percent of her population were above 65 years old; by 2025, it is expected to be 25 percent and by 2050, 30 percent.

<sup>3</sup> Former Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida (who held office on two occasions between 1946 - 1954) espoused a strategy that called for Japan to focus the nation's energies on economic pursuit. He surmised that if political and military engagements were equated with conflict, suffering and humiliation, economic undertakings seemed to provide a legitimate and peaceful channel for Japanese talents.

<sup>4</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein and Nobuo Okawara, "Japanese Security Issues," in Japan, A New Kind of Superpower?, eds. Craig Garby and Mary Brown Bullock (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1994, 59 and 63.

<sup>5</sup> Mike M. Mochizuki, "Japan and the Strategic Quadrangle," The Strategic Quadrangle, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 107.

<sup>6</sup> The Russians are believed to have sent their newest weapons system east of the Ural to avoid destruction under the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. In effect, while Europe saw a reduction in threat, Asia and especially Japan actually saw an increase in threat posed by the increase in numbers of weapon systems redeployed to the Russian Far East region.

<sup>7</sup> Masashi Nishihara, "Nakasone's Impact and Japanese Security Policy," Asian Defense Journal (1/1989): 38.

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<sup>8</sup> It is inevitable that Japan, and the rest of East Asia has that perception of waning US presence. Since the US pullout of Vietnam, and the closure of Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base in the Philippines, troops strength in the region has dropped from some 135,000 to the current 'magic' figure of 100,000. The dust has not settled over the anti-base protest by Okinawa residents over the rape incident. Concomitant with the recent President Clinton's announcement to overhaul the education system and focus on the domestic agenda, it appears that not much funds, from the same economic pie, will be available to fund the huge cost of troop deployments overseas. The Far Eastern Economic Review dated May, 2, 1997 reported that the cost of maintaining troops overseas is about 70% - 80% of the total \$250 billion military budget.

<sup>9</sup> China has agreed, following the second ASEAN Regional Forum in 1995, to participate in the series of workshops chaired by Indonesia with claimant countries to seek a peaceful solution to the Spratlys issue. It remains to be seen if this issue can be resolved amicably.

<sup>10</sup> Institute for National Strategic Studies, "The Strategic Setting" in Strategic Assessment 1995 (National Defense University 1995), 28.

<sup>11</sup> COL Harry Summers Jr., "The Reluctant Samurai," Defense Diplomacy January/February 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Stacey Evers, "Briefing - USA and Allies Move Towards New Pacific," Jane Defense Weekly, June 12, 1996: 29.

<sup>13</sup> The call was made in a 1991 LDP Special Commission report on "Japan's Role in International Society." The Commission was chaired by Ichiro Ozawa.

<sup>14</sup> The FSX is intended to replace the current JSDF F-1, a ground attack and interceptor aircraft. The intermediate training aircraft - T-4, as well as the observation aircraft - OHX were locally built.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Keddell Jr., "Defense as a Budgetary Problem: The Minimization of Conflict in Japanese Defense Policy Making, 1976-1987," (Ph.d diss., Political Science, University of Wisconsin, 1990), 249.

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<sup>16</sup> The list of instructions (or restrictions) covering use of firearms and endorsed by the Diet was very exhaustive. A list was made out covering what the unit was allowed to do in order to specifically define the scope of the unit's participation. That the Diet has to see to those details certainly indicate the unease of the politicians in allowing their SDF to participate in UN missions. According to an interview I had with COL Takashi Watanabe (the commander of the first Combat Engineer Battalion deployed to Cambodia), when we were both students at the US Army War College in 1996/97, he spoke of the problems of having to report to 'two bosses'. Under the UNTAC structure, he had to take instructions from Lieutenant-General Sanderson, the military component commander, as well as having to clear those instructions with the SDF HQ in Tokyo. When working in areas where there are potential threats, he had to request for troops from the Infantry elements of UNTAC to provide security as his troops were not allowed to undertake those roles where there are potential for fire-fight. In Japan, there were 'convulsions' when a civilian policeman on duty under UNTAC was killed.

<sup>17</sup> David E. Sanger, "Japan's Troops May Sail, And The Fear is Mutual," New York Times, June 12, 1991, p. E4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Katzenstein and Okawara, 64.

<sup>19</sup> Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone rescinded the one percent of GNP defense spending limit, agreed to transfer defense technology to the US, and decided to participate in the US Strategic Defense Initiative arguing that it would not be unconstitutional if the SDF was assisting the US to protect Japan before an actual attack took place. Mochizuki, 120.

<sup>20</sup> US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Expenditures and Arms Transfer 1987, ed. Daniel Gallik (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1987), 30.

<sup>21</sup> Edward J. Lincoln, Japan's New Global Role, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1993), 53.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>23</sup> Japan, like other countries in the region, does see China, when it is economically well-off and politically more self-

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confident, to pose a potential threat to stability in the region. Likewise, China views Japan in similar light given the latter's economic muscles.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Mack, "Idea of Multilateral Security for Asia Should Be Looked Into," The Straits Times, 13 May 1991. Mr. Andrew Mack is the Director of the Peace Research Center at the Australian National University in Canberra.

<sup>25</sup> Mr. Lee's interview with Asahi Monthly, a Japanese magazine, March 1991.

<sup>26</sup> David I. Hitchcock, "Asian Perception and the US Response," Washington Quarterly (Autumn 1989) : 129.

<sup>27</sup> "A Contrite Kaifu Forswears Japan Military Ambition in Asia," International Herald Tribune, 4-5 May 1991.

<sup>28</sup> Xinhua News Agency, 18 October 1996.

<sup>29</sup> The Straits Times, 4 May 1991.

<sup>30</sup> The Straits Times, 4 May 1991.

<sup>31</sup> "Beijing Blast Japan Over China Threat," The Straits Times, 18 October 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Defense Guide of Japan, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> This sum (in 1996 figures) is substantial in contrast to what Germany pays for host nation support. The Germans provide some US\$1.4 billion for the stationing of about 80,000 US troops. These details were mentioned by former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa in an address on "Rebuilding the US - Japan Security Structure" in Seattle, Washington on 12 March 1996.

<sup>34</sup> International Herald Tribune, 4-5 May 1991.

<sup>35</sup> Lee Poh Ping, "Japan and the Asia Pacific Region: A Southeast Asia Perspective," eds. Garby and Bullock, 135.

<sup>36</sup> Narongchai Akrasanee, "ASEAN-Japan Trade and Development: Synthesis," (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1983), 24.

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<sup>37</sup> Charles P. Wallace, "Singapore Proves a Welcome Friend for the US Military," Los Angeles Times, January 3, 1993, p.A4.



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